Research Brief

High School Advisory

Question: How can a high school advisory and mentoring program be established?

Summary of Findings:
Schools report that more and more students seem to slip through the cracks or are lost in the shuffle. More students fail ninth grade than any other grade level. William Glasser (1986) estimates that schools fail to engage more than half the students because they fail to fulfill four basic human needs for students: to belong and love, to gain power, to be free, and to have fun. Schools are turning to advisory and mentoring programs as a way to insure that each student is known well by at least one adult in the building, an adult to whom the student can turn for help with both school related and personal issues. Its purpose is to personalize the institution in order to better meet the needs of students. Advisors typically serve as the initial point of contact for parents and monitor the student's progress. Most of the literature about teacher advisory programs is written for the middle level, but the concept is gaining acceptance and popularity in high schools, as well.

Major Findings and Conclusions:

Effective high school advisory programs address the following key areas;

✓ Advisory Goals in the Domain of Relationships and Self-Esteem:

1. provide the opportunity for students to develop personal and community relationships with adults and peers;
2. develop a strong bond with and feel a sense of support from the Advisory adult and peers, giving the student a "home base";
3. promote student-teacher relationships:
4. demonstrate acceptable social behaviors and attitudes;
5. understand themselves and others better;
6. identify their interests, values, needs and abilities;
7. develop positive self-images;
8. address general self-esteem and competence beliefs:
9. provide social exchange and peer recognition in a safe environment;
10. link parents and school.
11. provide information, and coping strategies for the prevention of at-risk behaviors.
12. demonstrate an increased awareness of how their choices regarding drugs and alcohol affect their success;
13. make healthy choices

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✓ Advisory Goals in the Domain of Academics

1. provide academic and emotional support to students to ensure their academic success;
2. facilitate the transition from junior high to senior high school;
3. receive appropriate and thorough academic advising;
4. guide the development of academic portfolios;
5. know what it takes to be successful in school and accept responsibility for the level of their own success;
6. identify and use appropriate study skills;
7. learn to set goals;
8. participate in academic programs that respond to their individual needs and goals;
9. mediate between academic and social concerns;
10. identify career interests
11. skills development, portfolio presentations, SAT Prep, college applications, and financial aid.

✓ Possible structures of advisory programs:

1. Advisory meetings are held daily every morning in small groups, often as part of homeroom.
2. A 45 minute combination advisory/writing class (Boston Arts Academy, Boston, MA)
3. On the three activity days a week, freshmen work on a variety of activities which foster educational and personal responsibility. On the other two days, the advisory program acts as a directed study experience. Students learn effective study skills and frequently receive tutoring help from the senior advisors and the advisory teacher. (Highland Park High School, Highland Park, IL)
4. On Wednesdays and Thursdays, Tuba City departs from its standard seven-period schedule to offer four 90-minute class periods. Students attend four of their classes on Wednesdays and three on Thursdays, as well as a fourth "advisory" session. (Tuba City High School, Tuba City, Arizona)

✓ An effective advisory program should be:

1. Scheduled, so that students and teachers know what to expect and when to expect it.
2. Planned, to reflect development needs of high school students.
3. Appropriate and feasible within the context and philosophy of the particular high school.
4. Supported by the administration and the faculty, so the advisory program is indeed a team effort among school personnel, not just the pet project of a few.

✓ What are the administrative considerations in establishing a program?

1. How will students be assigned to advisors?
2. Who will serve as teacher advisors?

3. Where will advisory groups meet?
4. When and how often will advisory groups be scheduled?
5. What budget will be required for advisory activities?
6. How will the program be presented to the school stake holders: parents, school board, entering students, feeder schools?

✓ Parents and community members can contribute to the advisory program by the following:

1. speaking about their careers, hobbies, or special interests.
2. volunteering to help with special events, such as field trips or service learning projects.
3. teaching mini-courses, using their special talents.
4. providing materials for advisory projects, such as public service efforts.
5. mentoring young people who are learning about their special interests.
6. reading to, listening to, talking with, or generally being a caring adult to a young person in an advisory group who needs more attention than even the advisor can provide.
7. encouraging the advisor by applauding school efforts to know and value young people as individuals.
8. advocating with political forces so that sufficient teacher time and resources will be made available for a successful advisory program

✓ Seven reasons why teachers resist advisory programs (Van Hoose, 1991, pp.2-3).

1. Parents do not understand the concept and many may oppose it.
2. Many administrators are not really concerned about it.
3. Most teachers have had little formal preparation for service as an advisor.
4. Teachers do not understand the goals of the endeavor.
5. Advisory takes time – time that many teachers believe could be invested more effectively in preparing to teach their subject(s).
6. Some teachers do not want to engage in a program that requires personal sharing.
7. When it is implemented incorrectly and with little staff development and leadership, students do not provide positive feedback.

✓ Five of the most common reasons advisory programs fail.

1. Insufficient planning time before beginning the program.
2. Inadequate preparation of advisors.
3. Incomplete development of topics and activities for the advisory program.
4. Too frequent or too infrequent meetings of advisory groups.
5. Lack of administrative and/or counselor support for the program.

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Online Resources:

- Chicago Public Schools
  Provides an overview of their city wide advisory program. Links to their grade based advisory curriculum are available at the second link**.**
  http://intranet.cps.k12.il.us/Lessons/Advisory/

- Partners in Learning: Designing and Implementing an Effective Advisory Program
      Educators for Social Responsibility (ESR) helps educators create safe, caring, respectful, and productive learning environments. ESR's approach to advisory programs is guided by the principles of youth development, prevention, and resiliency. Effective advisory programs ensure that every student has the opportunity to feel known, heard, and understood. ESR works with high schools to develop an effective advisory program.
  http://www.esrnational.org/hs/reform/hsadvisory.htm

- Smaller Learning Communities Program
      Many schools that implement advisory programs are working in other ways to create smaller schools for their students. Research shows that students in smaller settings have better attendance, are less likely to drop out, have fewer discipline problems, and that many perform better academically. This program helps large high schools of 1,000 or more students to create smaller, more personalized learning environments.
  http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/sslc/

High Schools With Advisory Programs

- Eisenhower High School
Houston, Texas
http://www1.aldine.k12.tx.us/schools/websites/Eisenhower/introduction/index.html

- Highland Park High School
Highland Park, IL
http://www.d113.lake.k12.il.us/hphs/index.htm

- Somerset High School
Bellflower, California
http://www.cceanet.org/eprogram/2000/somerset.htm

- Twin Oaks High School
San Marcos, California
http://www.cceanet.org/eprogram/1998/twinoaks.htm